

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended): A negative resist composition comprising:

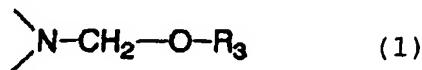
(A) an alkali-soluble resin;

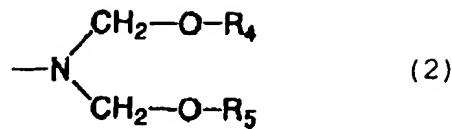
(B-1) a cross-linking agent capable of cross-linking with the alkali-soluble resin (A) by the action of an acid, in which the cross-linking agent is not a resin and is a phenol compound having a molecular weight of 2,000 or below and containing: at least one phenolic hydroxyl group; one or more benzene rings in the molecule; and at least two cross-linking groups bonded to any of the benzene rings, the cross-linking group being a group selected from the group consisting of a hydroxymethyl group, an alkoxyethyl group and an acyloxyethyl group;

(B-2) a cross-linking agent capable of cross-linking with the alkali-soluble resin (A) by the action of an acid, in which the cross-linking agent contains at least two groups selected from the group consisting of the groups represented by the following formulae (1) and (2);

(C) a compound capable of generating an acid upon irradiation with an actinic ray or radiation; and

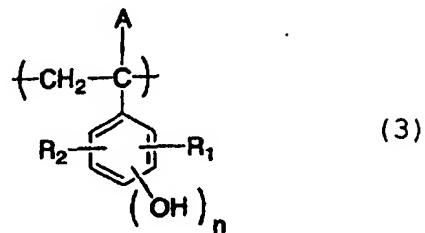
(D) a nitrogen-containing basic compound:





wherein R₃ represents a hydrogen atom, an alkyl group, or an alkylcarbonyl group; and R₄ and R₅ each represents a hydrogen atom, an alkyl group or an alkylcarbonyl group.

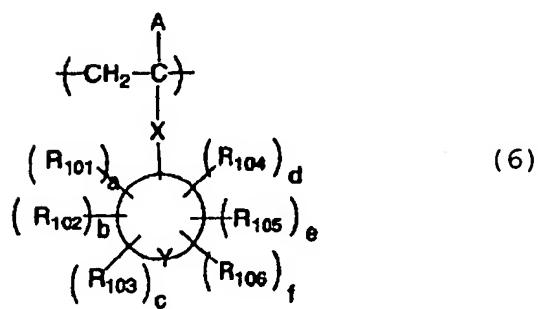
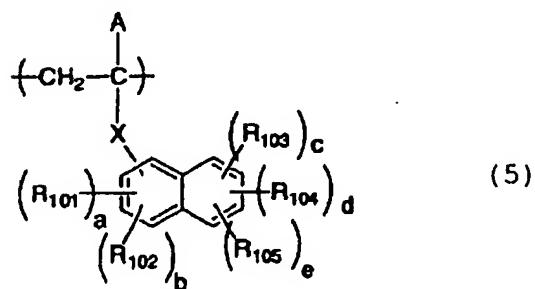
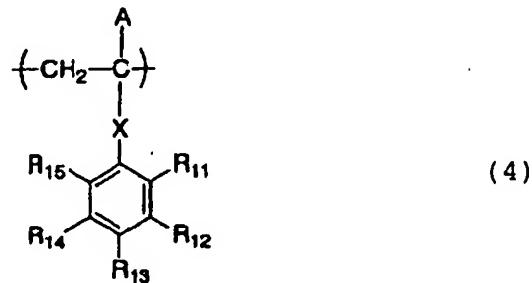
2. (previously presented): The negative resist composition as described in claim 1, wherein the alkali-soluble resin (A) contains a repeating unit represented by the following formula (3):



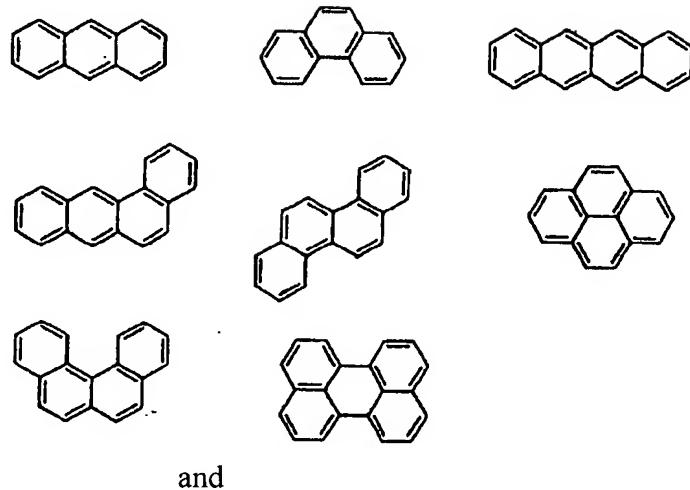
wherein A represents a hydrogen atom, an alkyl group, a halogen atom, or a cyano group; R₁ and R₂ each represents a hydrogen atom, a halogen atom, an alkyl group, an alkenyl group, a cycloalkyl group, an aryl group, an aralkyl group, an alkoxy group or an alkylcarbonyloxy group; and n represents an integer of 1 to 3.

Claim 3. (canceled).

4. (previously presented): The negative resist composition as described in claim 1, wherein the alkali-soluble resin (A) contains at least one repeating unit selected from the group consisting of the repeating units represented by the following formulae (4), (5) and (6):



wherein  represents a group selected from the group consisting of the following structures:



A represents a hydrogen atom, an alkyl group, a halogen atom, or a cyano group; X is a single bond, -COO-, -O-, or -CON(R₁₆)-; R₁₆ represents a hydrogen atom, or an alkyl group; R₁₁ to R₁₅ each represents a hydrogen atom, a halogen atom, an alkyl group, an alkenyl group, a cycloalkyl group, an aryl group, an aralkyl group, an alkoxy group or an alkylcarbonyloxy group; R₁₀₁ to R₁₀₆ each represents a hydroxyl group, a halogen atom, an alkyl group, an alkoxy group, an alkylcarbonyloxy group, an alkylsulfonyloxy group, an alkenyl group, an aryl group, an aralkyl group, or a carboxyl group; and a to f each represents an integer of from 0 to 3.

5. (original): The negative resist composition as described in claim 1, which further contains a surfactant.

6. (original): The negative resist composition as described in claim 2, wherein the alkali-soluble resin (A) contains the repeating unit represented by the formula (3) in an amount of 50 to 100 mole %.

7. (previously presented): The negative resist composition as described in claim 4, wherein the alkali-soluble resin (A) contains at least one repeating unit selected from the group consisting of the repeating units represented by the formulae (4), (5) and (6) in an amount of 3 to 50 mole %.

8. (previously presented): The negative resist composition as described in claim 1, wherein the cross-linking agent (B-1) is a phenol derivative having: a molecular weight of 2,000 or below; 3 to 5 benzene rings per molecule; and at least two cross-linking groups per molecule, in which the cross-linking group is a group selected from the group consisting of a hydroxymethyl group, an alkoxyethyl group and an acyloxyethyl group, and the cross-linking group is bonded to any of the benzene rings.

9. (previously presented): The negative resist composition as described in claim 1, wherein the cross-linking agent (B-1) is a phenol derivative having: 1 to 2 benzene rings per molecule; and at least two cross-linking groups per molecule, in which the cross-linking group is a group selected from the group consisting of a hydroxymethyl group, an alkoxyethyl group and an acyloxyethyl group, and the cross-linking group is bonded to any of the benzene rings.

10. (previously presented): The negative resist composition as described in claim 1, wherein the cross-linking agent (B-2) represents one of a compound or resin containing a

melamine skeleton, a compound or resin containing a urea skeleton, a compound or resin containing an imidazolidine skeleton, and a compound or resin containing a glycoluril skeleton.

11. (original): The negative resist composition as described in claim 1, which comprises the cross-linking agent (B-1) in a proportion of 0.5 to 50 % by weight, to the total solid content in the negative resist composition.

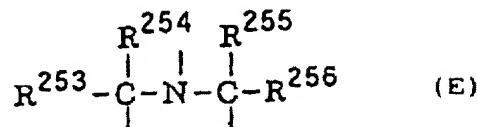
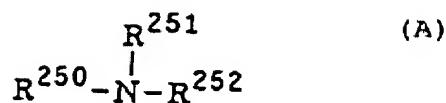
12. (original): The negative resist composition as described in claim 1, which comprises the cross-linking agent (B-2) in a proportion of 0.5 to 50 % by weight, to the total solid content in the negative resist composition.

13. (original): The negative resist composition as described in claim 1, wherein the ratio between the cross-linking agents (B-1) and (B-2) is from 3/97 to 97/3 by mole.

14. (original): A method of forming a resist pattern, which comprises: forming a resist film including the negative resist composition described in claim 1; irradiating the resist film with an actinic ray or radiation; and developing the irradiated resist film.

15. (previously presented): The negative resist composition as described in claim 1, wherein the nitrogen-containing basic compound (D) includes a structure represented by one of

the following formulae (A), (B), (C), (D) or (E), and in which formulae (B), (C), (D), or (E) each may be part of a cyclic structure:



wherein R^{250} , R^{251} and R^{252} , which may be the same or different, each represents a hydrogen atom, a 1-6C alkyl group, a 1-6C aminoalkyl group, a 1-6C hydroxyalkyl group, or a 6-20 C substituted or unsubstituted aryl group, and wherein R^{251} and R^{252} may combine to form a ring, and wherein R^{253} , R^{254} , R^{255} and R^{256} each represents a same or different 1-6C alkyl group.

16. (previously presented): The negative resist composition as described in claim 1, wherein the molar ratio of acid generator compound (C) to nitrogen-containing basic compound (D) is 2.5 to 300.

17. (previously presented): The negative resist composition as described in claim 1, wherein the molar ratio of acid generator compound (C) to nitrogen-containing basic compound (D) is 5.0 to 200.

18. (previously presented): The negative resist composition as described in claim 1, wherein the molar ratio of acid generator compound (C) to nitrogen-containing basic compound (D) is 7.0 to 150.

19. (previously presented): The negative resist composition as described in claim 1, wherein the molecular weight of the alkali-soluble resin (A), on weight average, is from 1,000 to 200,000.

20. (previously presented): The negative resist composition as described in claim 1, wherein the molecular weight of the alkali-soluble resin (A), on weight average, is from 2,000 to 50,000.